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Thursday, 24 October 1996, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Hurricane in the Bahamas and Cuba

The President: Before turning to the items on our agenda for this afternoon, I wish, on behalf of all the members of the Assembly, to extend our deepest sympathy to the Governments and peoples of the Bahamas and Cuba for the extensive material damage that has resulted from the recent hurricane. I also wish to express the hope that the international community will show its solidarity and respond promptly and generously to any request for help.

I now call on the representative of the Bahamas.

Mr. Turnquest (Bahamas): On behalf of the Government and people of the Bahamas, I wish to thank you most sincerely, Mr. President, for your kind words of sympathy and solidarity concerning the damage and destruction suffered by the Bahamas due to the recent passage of hurricane Lily. This category two hurricane damaged homes and destroyed crops in five islands in the central part of our archipelago. High tides and heavy rains were responsible for significant flooding. As a result, there was some concern about water contamination. The electricity supply in the affected areas was knocked out. The Government of the Bahamas and relevant national agencies are doing all in their power to cope with the situation while the full extent of the damage is still being assessed.

I am pleased to be able to inform the Assembly that the Government of the Bahamas has, to date, been able to cope with the situation on its own. We are grateful that the intensity and duration of the hurricane were not great, and that it did not pass over the main centres of population. Again, I thank the Assembly for its expression of sympathy and support. At the same time, my delegation extends its condolences and sympathy to our sister country, Cuba, which suffered even greater damages than the Bahamas.

The President: I now call on the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): At the outset, Mr. President, I wish to thank you deeply for your words, and express the gratitude of our Government and people to you, to the General Assembly and to this Organization, which embodies and represents values that are the essence of humanity. During difficult moments and circumstances they fill our people with hope and confidence for the future of humankind. I also wish to convey our warm feelings of solidarity to our sister people in the Bahamas.

Cuba has indeed suffered considerable economic losses, and has contacted the agencies of the United Nations system, whose initial responses to our request for emergency humanitarian assistance have been admirable. We are certain that they will be translated into prompt and concrete assistance to provide food, medicine and building materials to alleviate the consequences of the

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hurricane for Cuban families. I also wish to express my gratitude for the many offers of assistance from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals, whose selflessness and altruism have touched us, and whose offers we have gratefully accepted.

Thanks to the human solidarity of the Cuban people, to the efforts of our Government and to our belief that we should not abandon the helpless but guarantee fundamental services for all, we have not had to regret any loss of life. In the wake of the hurricane no injured person failed to receive medical care, no child was without a school to go to, and no people were without a roof over their heads, despite the fact that 5,640 dwellings have been destroyed and 78,855 have been partially damaged. In addition to the devastating damage to the economy, an enormous effort was undertaken to evacuate 392,732 people, which was essential in order to avoid fatalities.

Reconstruction is pressing rapidly ahead despite the serious lack of resources. Despite everything, the economy this year has shown clear indications of recovery, which is now enabling us to tackle the damage on a better footing. Despite the hurricane, the sugar and tourist industries will continue to grow; however, the food programme, among others, will require enormous efforts on our part.

We express our warm thanks to the United Nations and the General Assembly; to the agencies of the United Nations system; indeed, to all those who are offering assistance.

Adversity always makes human beings humble, and helps them better to understand that man is vulnerable, that our resources are limited, that we live together in a small planet, and that there is much that we can and must learn and do. Faced with adversity, the only way forward is hope.

We warmly thank you all for nurturing the infinite hopes of the Cuban people by standing at our side.

Address by Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon

The President: This afternoon the Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cameroon.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Cameroon, His Excellency Mr. Paul Biya, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Biya (*interpretation from French*): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Through your qualities as a diplomat and statesman, you have earned this mark of trust and respect which is a tribute both to you and to your beautiful country, Malaysia.

I should also like to pay tribute to your predecessor, Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral of Portugal, whose wisdom and clear-sightedness were a feature of the fiftieth anniversary of our Organization. I should also like to extend my sincere congratulations to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The tireless efforts he devotes with courage, dynamism and ability to the service of the United Nations and peace have earned him the gratitude of the entire African continent.

The Heads of State and Government of member countries of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) met last July in Yaoundé and reconfirmed their confidence in him.

They have requested me to take the necessary steps with United Nations Member States to ensure that a second five-year term is given to Africa. In this connection, they have recommended the candidature of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

We trust that the Members of our Organization will thus allow Africa to hold two successive terms at the head of the United Nations, just as Asia, Europe and Latin America did in the past.

The end of the cold war, which laid East-West antagonism to rest, prompted great hopes on all sides. We all hoped for the advent of a new order built on solidarity among peoples and faith in a common future. We all hoped that the logic of peace, security, development, and solidarity among peoples was going to replace the logic of war. We all hoped that the force of law would replace the law of force.

Today, it is fair to say that these hopes have been dashed and that the outcome has sometimes fallen short of our aspirations. Nevertheless, significant progress has been made.

Under the auspices of the United Nations, an advisory committee has been set up in Central Africa to deal with security matters. In this framework, alongside the recent Organization of African Unity summit meeting in Yaoundé, the countries of the subregion signed a non-aggression pact, a tangible indication of their resolve to develop mutual relations based on peace and good-neighbourliness.

Since the 1993 summit, the Organization of African Unity has had a Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution. This Mechanism is now becoming the main instrument for preventive diplomacy in Africa. However, in order to make it as effective as it should be, it needs real institutional, financial and operational capacity.

The Treaty of Pelindaba, which was signed in Cairo, makes Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Treaties establishing similar zones in South-East Asia and the South Pacific have also been concluded. Obviously, we hope that other denuclearized zones will be developed in other regions of the world.

At the global level, all peace-loving countries welcomed the recent adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. We encourage all States to ratify the Treaty as soon as possible.

Our common goal in this Organization is to preserve peace and to ensure the survival of the human race. But the constant efforts made by the international community would be incomplete if they stopped there. Of course we must preserve peace, but above all we must promote development, because development is the best guarantee of peace.

The reduction of military expenditures is necessary to enable the international community to make available the necessary resources for financing development operations throughout the world and to increase assistance to the poorest countries. Unfortunately, we are still far from that. Despite the many treaties and conventions adopted and the preventive measures implemented, international peace and security remain threatened by the emergence, persistence or the reappearance of hotbeds of tension. This applies in particular to the Middle East, where once again the situation has become very disturbing. We believe that the peace process that has been initiated must be pursued to implement the Oslo accords. In this regard, we hail the courageous position of the Israeli President, Mr. Ezer Weizman, in pursuing the interrupted dialogue.

As current Chairman of the OAU, I am of course particularly aware of the difficulties facing Africa. Many conflicts continue to wrack the continent, both within States and between States, and their effects are devastating for the populations of these countries. Peace remains to be consolidated in Angola. Any opportunity for a return to normal conditions in Burundi will depend on the opening of a dialogue and honest negotiations among all the interested parties. There must also be a return to a constitutional and truly democratic order that will legitimize the exercise of power.

In Rwanda, we can welcome the fact that the trials of those responsible for genocide have actually begun within the context of the International Tribunal at Arusha. We encourage the Rwandese authorities to continue their efforts to resolve the problem of displaced persons and refugees, to erect adequate judicial and administrative structures and to organize democratic elections.

In Cameroon, we have a border dispute with Nigeria. From the beginning, we have favoured dialogue and the peaceful settlement of the conflict by bringing the matter before the OAU, the Security Council and the International Court of Justice at The Hague. We will accept the Court's decision, as is only right.

In Liberia, the formation of a Transitional Government stemming from the Abuja talks seems to be encouraging. The international community must continue to support the peace efforts of the Economic Community of West African States and to provide logistical and material support to its Monitoring Group.

Given the situations in the Sudan and Somalia, the international community has an absolute duty to assist those countries consumed by interminable fratricidal warfare. The peoples concerned must themselves demonstrate their true will for peace and an acceptance of mutual tolerance and dialogue. Without the consent of the parties there can be no real peace.

Facing many acute problems today, Africa must consider peace to be an absolute necessity. Africa needs peace in order to place all its resources at the exclusive service of development. Africa needs peace to attract the

capital and investments that it lacks today. Africa needs peace to promote democracy and to build a state of law.

Along with preserving peace and security, Africa is moving along the road of democracy and the construction of the state of law. Because it intends to ensure justice and equal opportunity, democracy can and must work to maintain social balance. To reestablish itself and become anchored in the traditions of the continent, the democratic process must be supported and protected against threats of sectarianism, violence and fundamentalism.

Yet poverty is the most serious threat to democracy in Africa. It is indeed true that without peace and without development, there can be no democracy. Africa is the least-developed continent and the most affected by the disastrous effects of a profound economic crisis. The economic environment is hardly helpful to us. There is a growing danger that our continent will become marginalized. Every day, financial flows into Africa are decreasing. Official development assistance, already being cut back, is accompanied by increasing numbers of conditions. The debt burden is becoming increasingly heavy. It is very difficult for our products to reach the international market. There is a widespread tendency towards disinvestment in our countries and there is little new capital available to us. And yet, Africa, faced with this crisis, has acted.

It realizes that responsibility for the economic and social development of Africa is primarily the responsibility of the Africans themselves, who must undertake far-reaching reforms with the support of bilateral and multilateral donors to promote good governance, democracy, respect for human rights and liberalized economies. However, all these reforms involve enormous social and financial costs which Africa alone cannot pay. The African people have already agreed to make important sacrifices, but to ensure recovery and revival we need increased support from the international community. If Africa is to have a chance at sustainable progress, this support involves an increase in the flow of public and private financial resources; a significant reduction in debt; strong support for the efforts to diversify the commodities we produce; and easing of access to the world market for our exports - a wish we expressed in the Final Act of the Uruguay Round at Marrakech.

The international community has not remained aloof from the present situation of the developing countries. Ambitious programmes have been advocated to help Africa, particularly with the encouragement of the United Nations. These include the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, which has just undergone a mid-term evaluation; the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa; and an Alliance for Africa's Industrialization, which has been provided by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. Moreover, within the context of South-South cooperation, we welcome the Tokyo Declaration on development in Africa.

However, significant resources must be made available in order to give effect to all these initiatives. It is the international community alone that can and must mobilize them.

Outside the United Nations, the conclusions of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries at the recent Lyon Summit provided a glimmer of hope on bringing poor countries into the mainstream of international trade and easing their debt burden.

We welcome the recent decision taken by the international financial institutions on the adoption of a mechanism for reducing multilateral debt up to a level of 80 per cent of debt-service payments for a number of developing countries. We hope that this decision will be implemented quickly and extended to the largest possible number of African countries, the least developed countries as well as those with middle-level incomes.

Apart from the economic issues, this is an appropriate forum to draw the attention of the international community to the social problems we face: pandemics which we are not yet able to control; women's rights, which we intend to promote and which we defended at the Fourth World Conference on Women at Beijing; the rights of the child, in which the children of Africa raised at Yaoundé at the time of the Organization of African Unity Summit on the joint initiative of the Pan-African Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund; employment for young people; marginalization; clandestine immigration; and drug trafficking. All are of the greatest concern to us. They are all related to poverty and the absence of development, and were the subject of our main concern at the World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen.

Africa cannot cope with all these problems by just taking short-term actions here and there. Africa will find its way back to the road to growth by taking long-term, decisive action to consolidate the bases of its social fabric. What Africa needs is a freely assumed partnership

centred on a real contract of solidarity and a real pact between North and South on co-development.

As we can see, the challenges facing us are many. I have certainly not mentioned all of them. Some of these challenges are longstanding; others are recent.

No continent today can escape globalization, and all countries, without exception, are involved in it. Today, more than ever before, the international community is aware of its common destiny. We believe that the response to the challenges we face must necessarily reflect this globalization.

The United Nations must adapt to the international environment now prevailing at the end of the century, in order better to do its work today. The necessary reforms in its principal organs - the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat - must allow all nations, without discrimination, to participate actively in the conduct of international public affairs.

This means, *inter alia*, greater transparency within the Security Council, in its working methods and in the equitable geographical representation of all regions of the world. It also means strengthening the role and responsibilities of the General Assembly in the areas of international peace maintenance, security and cooperation. It means a Secretariat that can reflect the universality of the Organization and that has adequate resources and greater authority.

What this means, in short, is a renewed and revitalized Organization; an Organization capable of providing real answers to the needs of peoples and to the hopes ascribed to it; an Organization worthy of the twenty-first century.

During the course of the twentieth century the human race has made outstanding progress in the areas of science and technology. Yet, despite these achievements of which the human race is so proud, an immense part of the human race was excluded from development. On the eve of the third millennium, the economic backwardness of the Third World is still a major challenge to the international community. All of us together can and must take up this challenge. The balance of the world is at stake.

The conquest of outer space provides us daily with extraordinary evidence of what people can do when they have the will to cooperate. Undoubtedly the human race as a whole, in a spirit of solidarity, can win the battle for peace and prosperity. All that is needed is the desire to do so.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cameroon for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Hasina (Bangladesh) (*spoke in Bengali; English text furnished by the delegation*): I bring you, Sir, and the representatives to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations the greetings and good wishes of the people of Bangladesh. It is a matter of special satisfaction and pleasure to see you, Mr. President, a diplomat of worldwide renown, in the Chair. Your vast experience and profound wisdom will no doubt be great assets for the General Assembly in guiding its deliberations to a successful conclusion.

Twenty-two years ago, on 25 September 1974, the Father of our nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, stood on this rostrum to address the General Assembly on behalf of the people of Bangladesh. It is indeed an emotional moment for me to have the honour and privilege of standing here today as the Prime Minister of the Government of Bangladesh to address this unique global forum. I express my gratitude to the workers and leaders of my party and others, whose sacrifice has made it possible for me to be here today. I am also grateful to the people of Bangladesh, of all classes and professions, whose invaluable support during the last election has created this rare opportunity for me

Dramatic changes have taken place on the world stage during these 22 years as old ideological divisions have broken down, regional cooperation efforts have deepened and a new constellation of geopolitical alignments has emerged following the rapid economic development of the Asia-Pacific region over the past two decades.

Great changes have also taken place in Bangladesh. The brutal assassination of the Father of the nation, together with most of his family, on 15 August 1975 altered the course of our history. For me, it was a devastating personal loss, as my father, mother and brothers were killed - not even my 11-year-old brother was spared. But for the nation, it was a setback of terrible proportions. At a stroke, the democratic framework and all we had fought for through many years of struggle and sacrifice, culminating in the success of our liberation struggle and achievement of independence, were overturned and the nation was plunged into a period of uncertainty and conflict. An era characterized by military coups, assassination and rigged elections followed as the people of Bangladesh were systematically deprived of their democratic rights. The people lost their voting rights as the electoral process was reduced to a sham, a manipulated farce, while all the other mechanisms of accountability were undermined.

Against this sombre background, during the past 21 years, my party, together with other political forces, has had to launch a mass movement to hold general elections under a neutral caretaker Government. In the context of our past experience, this was considered essential to ensure free and fair elections. It is a tribute to the freedom-loving people of Bangladesh that they refused to accept the attempt to foist upon them the results of a rigged election and handed down their verdict on this issue in no uncertain terms.

The will of the common men and women of my country at last prevailed and a free and fair election was held on 12 June this year, in which 73 per cent of the electorate cast their vote. Acclaimed both at home and abroad as the fairest election ever held in Bangladesh, it has restored peace and political stability to the nation. Once again, we are poised to move forward in our struggle to achieve the economic emancipation of the people. It is therefore a happy coincidence that, closely following upon the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the silver jubilee of the independence of Bangladesh is being celebrated by its people. A new democratic era, an era of hope and progress, has dawned in Bangladesh.

The issues raised here 22 years ago by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are still valid today. He called upon the international community for a

> "regeneration of the feeling of human solidarity and brotherhood and an acknowledgement of interdependence [to] bring about a rational solution and the urgent action to avoid ... catastrophe". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Plenary Meetings, 2243rd meeting, para. 9)*

The greatest challenge faced by the United Nations, he argued eloquently, was to marshall the

> "forces of reason to bring about a just international economic order", *(ibid., para. 10)*

one that would ensure the sovereignty of each State over its natural resources and also

> "seek to establish a framework of international cooperation based upon the recognition of the overriding common interest of the countries of the world in a stable and just economic system". *(ibid., para. 10)*

The last two decades have witnessed vast changes in the global political scene. The end of the cold war has brought about profound and fundamental changes in international relations. However, despite these historic changes, many of the concerns that the Father of our nation articulated so forcefully and persuasively in this great forum still exist. The majority of humankind still suffers from poverty, hunger, disease and malnutrition. Opportunities for education and adequate access to health facilities are still denied to millions of people everywhere, but especially in the developing countries. In Bangladesh, which is listed as a least developed country, the pace of progress over the past two decades has been extremely slow. We have been barely winning the race against our population growth. My Government is therefore determined to accelerate economic growth in order to eradicate poverty once and for all. While rapid economic growth is our highest priority, we will not neglect the question of equity and social justice. Indeed, the Bangladesh Awami League has always stood by the poor, the weak, the deprived, the oppressed and the downtrodden people of the country. Therefore, economic growth with equity and social justice remains our national goal.

My Government firmly believes in a political system that will ensure not only the rule of law, but also the accountability and transparency of the Government. Under the system that we have established, the Parliament is the centre of the nation's political life where all the major decisions are taken. Freedom of the judiciary, freedom of the press and basic human rights are guaranteed. The rights of women and children and of minorities will be upheld by the Government as its sacred responsibility.

My Government has embarked on a pragmatic programme for the rapid economic and social development of the nation. Poverty eradication, sustainable growth, protection of the environment and human-resources development are some of the key features of our development strategy. Like most countries around the world, we have opted for an open economy based on the free market and an outward-looking trade strategy. Under a liberalized trade regime, we will follow prudent fiscal and monetary policies in order to maintain stability and economic competitiveness. We hope the macroeconomic stability that we enjoy will encourage foreign direct investment in Bangladesh. We have offered significant incentives to foreign investors with strong assurances of security for their investment.

While the overall growth record of Bangladesh has not been satisfactory, we have achieved success in certain fields, for which we can take some pride. We have, for example, made considerable progress in the area of family planning and welfare. In fact, we have reached the phase of demographic transition with a significant fall in population growth rate, with concomitant benefits. We have developed ways of making drinking water safe and of controlling communicable diseases such as diarrhoea by using oral-rehydration techniques.

We have also made progress, though limited, in the education of girls and women. The empowerment of women enjoys high priority in Bangladesh today, and we will press ahead with various reform proposals to ensure that the women of Bangladesh can march side by side with the men. It was heartening to see the massive turnout of the women voters at the last general elections, on 12 June 1996.

The programme of rural electrification is making headway, but we would like to speed up the rate of growth. Non-governmental organizations are playing a very important role in our development process, especially at the grass-roots level. My Government supports the activities of the non-governmental organizations which supplement the Government's development efforts. Some of the Bangladesh non-governmental organizations have earned worldwide recognition for their innovative methods.

We can take very little comfort from what modest gains we have achieved. Much remains to be done. We have been prone to natural disasters such as floods, droughts and cyclones. We are, however, convinced that by taking well-planned preventive and protective measures in advance we can mitigate the adverse impact of such natural calamities. Massive investment is needed to implement these programmes, and we hope to mobilize the necessary resources for this purpose. Here I would like to express our appreciation and thanks to the international community, especially the developed nations, for their generosity in helping us in our times of need.

In this context, I wish to refer to the declining trend in official development assistance. The level of official development assistance last year was the lowest in the last 20 years, signalling a change in the priorities of the donor countries. Falling far short of achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP), the flow of development assistance has not reached even half that level. For the developing countries as a whole, but especially for the least developed among them, such a negative trend in official development assistance flows is a matter of deep concern. In my own country we are seeking private foreign investment to inject dynamism into our growth process, but there are certain sectors of the economy, including the infrastructure, which will continue for some years to depend on adequate official development assistance flows. Renewal of the bilateral development assistance programmes, as well as replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and the Asian Development Fund (ADF) are therefore essential to maintain the availability of resources for these vital programmes.

Many important changes in the world economy have taken place in recent years. And in the midst of many conflicting currents, there is one unmistakable trend: that of greater global interdependence. Trade barriers have come down and trade flows have expanded. New technologies have emerged which have revolutionized management and communications. And private international capital movements have swelled enormously. Many previously centrally planned economies have gone into the painful process of transition, opening up to foreign trade and investment. Movements for regional cooperation - notably in Europe and in the Asia and

Pacific region - have gathered pace. All these changes have opened up exciting new vistas of opportunity for trade, investment and economic cooperation.

Unfortunately, we in the least developed countries, have been unable to share fully in the new growth opportunities that have emerged. For our part, at a national level, we have sought to engender the changes in economic management and investment strategies that will enhance our ability to draw on the dynamism of the global economy. There are a number of common problems holding us back. However, many of these can be effectively tackled only through cooperative efforts, with the active assistance of multilateral and bilateral donors. One of the most important of these is the weakness in our social and economic infrastructure, areas where long-term investments are needed. In some areas, such as education, the dividends to investment are such that private investment funds are difficult to attract, and larger flows of concessional funding are essential. Without this investment in human capital, the least developed countries will find that they are falling farther behind in the new age of ideas and technology, where the wealth of a society will be determined by its ownership of and ability to create new ideas.

The heightened levels of global interdependence and linkages have brought with them new challenges in the areas of macroeconomic management, economic regulations and international law. The repercussions of some economic activities cross national borders, while the international nature of the operations of many multinational corporations and financial institutions have rendered national regulations virtually useless in many cases. Regional cooperation agreements have sought to deal with these problems, but I feel that global solutions are really necessary. For instance, in the international capital market, the scale and volatility of private short-term capital flows are such that any attempt by even the richest group of countries to intervene using official reserves would be quickly overwhelmed. While intervention in the operation of any properly functioning market is generally to be avoided, the scope to intervene in the event of market failure must remain.

The United Nations represents the efforts of the peoples of the world to define and develop a framework for mutual cooperation upon which an enduring and comprehensive peace could be based. With the ideological divisions that dominated the debates on development strategies now a thing of the past, the United Nations can now perhaps achieve its true potential in furthering the cause of economic and social development. We now expect the United Nations not only to play a more active direct role in this area but also to guide and coordinate the activities of all the international development agencies. As you, Mr. President, indicated in your opening statement:

> "If the United Nations cannot be the main player in development resources, it must at least be the main development catalyst, and one that can strongly influence coordination at the macro level with other bodies that have more access to resources, but that are less democratically set up." (*Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Plenary Meetings, 1st meeting, p. 3*)

Much has been said in recent years about the role of the United Nations. Let me declare here in this global forum in unambiguous terms that my country supports a strong world body which would be fully equipped to deal with the tasks and responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter.

We recognize with deep appreciation the valuable services rendered to humanity by such United Nations agencies as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to name just a few. These and other agencies have provided extremely valuable support to the global community in dealing with today's complex issues and problems. The rapidly blossoming regional cooperation that we are witnessing today in different continents owes much to the United Nations regional economic commissions, which provided the initial impulse for such groupings. Above all, the United Nations itself, despite the criticism of its detractors, has rendered such valuable service to humankind over the last 50 years that it remains the greatest symbol of hope for peace, stability and prosperity of the world. On behalf of Bangladesh, I wish to pay tribute to the United Nations for championing the cause of peace and security.

In this connection, I wish to refer to the peacekeeping operation of the United Nations and to the humble contribution of my country to this noble cause.

Bangladesh has responded to the appeal for the contribution of troops for peacekeeping operations under the provisions of the Charter and resolutions of the Security Council. We consider this our solemn duty as a Member of the United Nations. It is a matter of much satisfaction to us that our valiant soldiers have gone to different trouble spots around the world and have given a good account of themselves in fulfilling the tasks assigned to them with honour, dignity and dedication to duty. We are proud of our troops serving abroad under trying conditions, often at great risk to their lives. I would like to reiterate our readiness to respond positively whenever we are called upon to assist the peace process in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

Disarmament, in particular nuclear disarmament, has always been a major preoccupation for the United Nations and the international community. The very first resolution of the General Assembly in January 1946 called for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Later that year, the Baruch Plan was also in a very real sense a proposal to proscribe and to destroy nuclear weaponry and to assure the use of atomic energy only for peaceful purposes. This was a unique proposal, coming as it did from the only State that at that time possessed this weapon of awesome destructive power. In the decade of the 1960s, both the United States of America and the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics placed before the then Eighteen Nation Committee on Disarmament in Geneva their respective plans for general and complete disarmament. As recently as 1986, we have had proposals by the then Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev for a phased elimination of nuclear weapons. Independent and highly respected think-tanks and commissions, and even the International Court of Justice, have pronounced themselves against such weapons. Nuclear weapons are an abomination and surely can have no place in a civilized world. This awareness clearly exists, and the desire for their elimination is also discernible. The fear of the possibility of a nuclear Armageddon has happily enough receded. What is called for now is the courage, confidence and initiative to pursue the nuclear disarmament agenda in all earnestness as the nuclear Powers themselves are committed to do under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

There is one important issue that I would wish to flag before I close - an issue that is of concern to all. I refer, of course, to the issue of migration. Migratory flows of peoples over the globe today are, to be very candid, inspired more by economic motivations than by any other factor. Over the years, immigrants, in search of a better life, have contributed significantly to the settlement of wildernesses and also to the development of many countries and cultures. Such people, almost by definition, are hardy and prepared to work hard and for long hours. Since many of them are also in violation of the immigration laws of their host countries, they are often the victims of exploitation and abuse. They do not receive the benefits and protection of the laws and conventions that apply to those fleeing political persecution. According to some estimates, as many as 125 million people live outside their countries, with more than half of them moving from one developing country to another. It is thus an issue that concerns all countries or groups of countries and, unless addressed in a meaningful manner, it could become one of the major problems of the future.

This could mean rules and regulations at the international level, and certainly also measures to remove or redress the root causes of such migratory flows. It is a social issue, an economic issue and also a humanitarian issue that impinges on human security. An international conference devoted to this specific subject seems to be warranted by the continuing predicament.

At various international forums and seminars, cogent arguments are often put forward in favour of unrestricted global flows of capital, trade and services. It seems to us that an equally persuasive case can be made for more deregulated movements of labour. This is assuredly an issue that needs to be looked at, in all seriousness, with an open mind and without discrimination. History would tend to corroborate the view that immigrants have enriched and enhanced, rather than impoverished, countries where they have gone in search of a better living.

The one symbol of New York City, and indeed of the United States, which is recognized worldwide is the Statue of Liberty, a gift to the United States from the people of France. On a clear day, when landing at John F. Kennedy Airport, one can get a glimpse of it from the air.

At the feet of the statue is a broken shackle, symbolizing freedom rediscovered, and at its base, inscribed on a tablet, are the immortal words of the poem "The New Colossus", by Emma Lazarus:

(spoke in English)

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door."

(spoke in Bengali)

What sort of a future do we aspire to or envisage? The greatest poet in our language, Rabindranath Tagore, evoked a lyrical vision when, many years ago, he wrote:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where the tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by Thee into ever-widening thought and action."

The problem for us by which I mean all of the developing world - is how to get to this ideal, or perhaps I should say to this "achievable goal". It is not that we are lacking in good intentions or unaware of the magnitude or enormity of the task; it is just that we have never really pursued this with the faith, persistence and determination that it deserves. We are always beginning but we never continue, never carry on, never complete and never conclude. All too frequently we are content with simply taking the first step in the right direction, seldom proceed to the second step and almost never to the third. Meaningful progress cannot be achieved simply through a sequence of beginnings that do not really begin and first steps that lead nowhere.

What we need at this time is the kind of vision, wisdom and farsightedness shown by a great American Secretary of State and an outstanding American President, who formulated and implemented expeditiously and, of course, with the full support of an enlightened and far-sighted Congress, a grand plan to revive the devastated economy of Europe in the wake of the Second World War.

I would like to list the elements of an agenda for peace, security and development that must be pursued vigorously and earnestly.

First, we need urgently to implement the plans of action that have already been agreed upon to uplift the poorest among the developing countries from the miasma of despondency.

Second, we need to carry forward expeditiously the plans already adopted for the survival, protection and development of the world's children.

Third, we need to increase awareness at all levels and to ensure the early implementation of treaties negotiated and concluded at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro.

Fourth, we need to emphasize the concept of sustainable development as the basis for national development efforts.

Fifth, we need to strengthen the mechanisms for promoting human rights worldwide, especially for those of the most vulnerable groups, and to secure for them the right to migrate to countries and regions where they can contribute and earn their living.

Sixth, we need to build and reinforce consensus for educating and empowering women so as to reduce population growth.

Seventh, we need to live up to commitments to eradicate poverty made by Governments at the Social Summit in Copenhagen.

Eighth, we need fully and speedily to implement the Platform for Action for the social, economic and political empowerment of women, as agreed at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Ninth, we need to live up to the Declaration and recommendations for an enhanced trade partnership between developed and developing countries and for better integrating the least developed countries into a global economy, as adopted at the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Tenth, we need to implement the global plan of action for improved living conditions, as agreed at the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul.

Eleventh, we need to eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all.

Twelfth, and above all, we need to convert the world's economy from a military to a civil one, securing the rights of individuals and sharing resources fairly and equitably.

Much of this agenda has already been agreed upon. What we need is simply to proceed to the second and third steps and beyond. We must be nothing other than perfectionists in our pursuit of peace, security and development. At the same time, collective efforts must be taken to achieve the goal of world peace and the welfare of humankind.

The twentieth century began on a high note of hope. But as it draws to a close, our optimism has been shaken by instances of incredible malevolence, hatred, savagery and some of the worst excesses suffered by humankind.

I believe that, as we are poised to enter the new century, we can, if we so choose, play the historic role of pioneers or architects of a peaceful new world.

As an active player in the global community, Bangladesh will continue to contribute to its realization. We have already made a beginning by earnestly taking up responsibility for ensuring a better life for the 120 million members of the human race that inhabit my beloved Bangladesh. We seek the cooperation of all in this pursuit.

Long live Bangladesh.
Long live the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the statement she has just made.

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, was escorted from the rostrum.

Agenda item 22

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/297 and Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.5/Rev.1)

The President: I call on the representative of Honduras to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.5/Rev.1.

Mr. Martínez Blanco (Honduras) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Honduras is pleased to submit to the plenary of the General Assembly the draft resolution entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States" on behalf of the sponsors, the following Member States: Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and Venezuela.

I should now like to describe the main points of this draft resolution. The preambular part refers to resolution 49/5 of 21 October 1994 and the report of the Secretary-General of 19 August 1996. It recalls that the purposes of the United Nations are, *inter alia*, to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian nature. It bears in mind that the Charter of the United Nations provides for the existence of regional arrangements and agencies for dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, and whose activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

It also notes the third general meeting held between representatives of the United Nations system and of the Organization of American States (OAS) in April 1995 and expresses satisfaction at the way in which the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the Assistant Secretary-General of the OAS have been performing their work of coordination.

The operative part of the draft resolution expresses appreciation to the Secretary-General for his initiative in convening a meeting between the United Nations and the heads of regional organizations, with the participation of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, and expresses satisfaction at the cooperation between the two organizations and the development of the electoral processes in Haiti and Nicaragua, respectively.

The draft resolution also welcomes the meetings between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, those between their representatives throughout the period under review and the signing of the Collaboration Agreement between the two organizations on 17 April 1995. It emphasizes that the cooperation between these organizations should be conducted in accordance with their respective mandates, competence and composition and recommends that general meetings between representatives of the United Nations system and the Organization of American States be held when deemed necessary to continue to review and appraise progress while continuing sectoral and focal point meetings operating through the focal points already established.

The last part of the draft resolution expresses appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General in the promotion of cooperation between the two organizations and requests him to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session a report on the implementation of the present draft resolution. Finally, it requests the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly an item entitled □Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States□.

Honduras is a firm believer in the fact that cooperation between the two organizations constitutes positive progress towards the maintenance of peace and security in the region, allowing the countries there to have a broader forum for discussion and negotiation in the search for solutions to economic, social, cultural, political and humanitarian problems and respect for human rights.

We are sure that, with the support of friendly nations in the region and with the determined efforts of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States, we will gradually find more points of convergence, collaboration and cooperation between the two organizations. These will make their work more effective in the context of their respective functions and mandates, as can be seen from the experience of the legislative, municipal and presidential elections held in Haiti held from June to December 1995, the joint operations of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti and the support given by the Electoral Observer Mission in the general elections in Nicaragua held on 20 October 1996.

We also consider very encouraging the progress made in the areas of human rights; police training; cooperation in regional human resources training through the United Nations University fellowships programme; improved cooperation with the Economic Commission for Latin American and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), as well as the joint programmes for international drug control aimed at harmonization at the local level of legislation and the work of the agencies responsible for this problem; the improvement of the condition of women; and the prospects of identifying main areas of cooperation between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization of American States in the areas of education, science, culture and communication, as well as with other organizations of the United Nations system.

We hope to receive the support of the other Member States of the General Assembly so that this draft resolution can be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mrs. Ramirez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): It is with great satisfaction that we note the fruitful cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS) as a result of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 49/5 (1994). No doubt the exchanges between the United Nations and OAS as one of the oldest bodies in the present multilateral system can only be of mutual benefit. Within the strictly political realm, we must mention the presence of the United Nations in Central America in close cooperation with OAS, the positive aspects of which we have all witnessed.

With reference to Haiti, the document on this agenda item (A/51/297) clearly points to the framework of cooperation between the two organizations and its excellent results. Argentina, which actively participated in Haiti's return to democracy, welcomes those activities.

Particularly topical is the joint concern on the question of landmines. Here we wish to emphasize that the inter-American system was in the vanguard for many years. In fact, it was as a result of conflicts in Central America and the subsequent normalization that the international community became aware of the devastating effects of these weapons on the civilian population; hence, the logical militancy of everyone in Latin America and the Caribbean against landmines that is now reflected in the efforts of the General Assembly.

With reference to the human rights system, we believe that cooperation can be beneficial for the United Nations, since in the OAS we have advanced to what might be considered exemplary levels. As this is based on a harmonious cultural hegemony that serves as a solid foundation for the defense of human rights, it is clear that there is a strong political will, public opinion and social awareness in favour of positive action. Thus there is widespread support for the work of the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights and the Court, with its headquarters in Costa Rica, on respect for international law and the OAS charter.

Also very important is cooperation in questions relating to drug trafficking, money laundering and related issues. In December 1995, Argentine hosted a conference in this field as a result of the work of the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and the impetus provided by the Government of the United States together with other Latin American and Caribbean countries. Also important was the meeting held at Santiago in Chile between CICAD and the International Narcotics Control Board.

We believe it useful to emphasize the work of ECLAC in the economic and development fields. From its inception, the Commission has had, and continues to have, an important role in the study of the regional economic and social situation. Its analytical and operational capacity go beyond the regional level and its excellence is recognized worldwide. Similarly, ECLAC's process of internal reform is an example of its capacity to adapt in a globalized world. We hope that this process of reform will quickly yield concrete operational results.

Latin America has traditionally been prolific in creating valuable institutions and in developing others that continue to operate within the international legal system. That is why legal cooperation offers a field which should be more intensively explored.

The consolidation of the rule of law, together with broad restructuring of the economic systems of the countries of the region, created the necessary conditions and confidence for attracting a substantial flow of foreign investment once again. This inflow of capital facilitated the activation of our economies. In 1996, we hope the inflow of short- and long-term capital will be close to $50 billion per year. This will allow the Latin American and Caribbean countries to continue to grow at above the world average by rates of 5 to 7 per cent per year, ensuring sustainable human development in our societies.

This picture, which is strengthened by a deep environmental awareness, makes the OAS member countries a model that we are proud to present to the international community.

What I have said makes it clear that the inter-American system has achieved a level of cooperation and understanding which we wish to highlight. Encouraged by countries that practice democracy, open economy and good governance, it has been able to be a pioneer in the areas of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, human rights, environmental protection and now in generating the conditions necessary for speedier integration. Thus, OAS is the coordinating body of the activities derived from the Miami summit, in which the various free trade areas that have emerged in the Americas are moving together.

All this creates an ambience of progress that is fertile for economic investment and human living, and offers the rest of the world a message of hope, without structural conflict, in which all participate actively.

For these reasons, Argentina is pleased to co-sponsor the draft resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the OAS, which is before the General Assembly for consideration.

Mr. Turbay (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): As stated in the draft resolution before us today, the United Nations must be the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of common ends such as achieving international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Few efforts could be more productive in that direction than the vigorous collaboration of the Organization with the regional bodies. In today's world of complex and dynamic international relations, such coordination is especially necessary. One of the greatest challenges of the post-cold-war era is the genuine multilateralization of international action. It is that prospect that best embodies the aspirations for enhanced development, peace, equality and justice that the international community as a whole hopes to see as a result of globalization. Efforts to achieve this will not succeed unless the actions of the different international bodies at the different levels are harmonized.

The doubts of the past about the genuine possibilities of open and dependable cooperation between regional organizations and the United Nations arose at an international scene marked by confrontation and not from structural difficulties.

The experience of recent years, although scant, points to the usefulness of such cooperation. The Secretary-General acknowledges this fact in □An Agenda for Peace□ when he highlights new means of cooperation in the search for peace. Such is the case of the political and technical support given by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in Abkhazia clearly illustrates the modality of diplomatic support. The clearest example of operational support has been the participation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in supporting the United Nations Protection Force in the former Yugoslavia. The best examples of joint deployment are the field missions of the Economic Community of West African States in Liberia and of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Georgia. The best example of joint operations is the case of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti with the Organization of American States (OAS).

Given that each modality has its own inherent characteristics, there are varying opinions as to the effectiveness and relevancy of each experience, with regard both to the mechanism itself and to its implementation.

In the case of Haiti, in our part of the world, we should first note that the operation was civilian in nature and that it met the main criterion of Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter for this type of activity in that the aims of the OAS were completely compatible with those of the United Nations. Of equal importance is the fact that the collaboration took place at the explicit request and with the consent of the State concerned and had a clear division of labour and clear mandates.

The case of Haiti is the classic example of how efforts can be combined for the good of the region and of the world. We should particularly highlight the efforts made in the area of human rights and in support of the holding and monitoring of the elections that took place there.

It is precisely because the OAS does not undertake or participate in military peacekeeping operations that its resources and capabilities in the field of peaceful conflict resolution make it an unsurpassed ally of the United Nations in its search for peace. For this reason, mutual cooperation will be central in carrying out preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building activities in the future.

My delegation will support the good use of OAS capabilities so long as there are clear signs that cooperation in this field is necessary and so long as that it takes place within a framework of respect for and strengthening of the role of the General Assembly. Furthermore, it must strictly honour the concept of consent by States and enjoy clearly defined and differentiated mandates.

There are many other fields in which effective cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States can be pursued. In this respect, I wish to highlight the three meetings that have taken place between the Secretaries-General of the two organizations. The Secretary-General's report, in document A/51/297 of 19 August 1996 on the joint activities of the two organizations, allows us to see that, although cooperation is still incipient, the array of themes in which joint efforts between the two entities are possible is nevertheless very wide.

The consultations and exchanges of information that have been taking place within the context of joint efforts are especially relevant. For this reason, the establishment of a consultative mechanism between the departments, offices, programmes and organs of the United Nations system and the OAS secretariat is a positive step. We believe that the ongoing engagement in cooperative efforts must continue at a high level, but without excluding other vital branches of the United Nations Secretariat. Since both organizations are involved in reorganization, the first great benefit they might obtain from this consultative mechanism is the exchange of experiences and of proposals on administrative matters.

Perhaps one of the most suitable topics for immediate cooperation on the humanitarian front is that of anti-personnel landmines. Some of the countries most affected by this scourge are in Latin America. The recent OAS resolution calling for a moratorium constitutes an important step towards halting the production of these aberrant arms in the region. A regional strategy directed towards the establishment of a landmine-free zone, along the lines of that employed for nuclear arms, could be the most appropriate. The magnitude of eradication tasks and the political difficulties of instituting a ban make it necessary to draw the greatest advantage from the capabilities of the different actors in this area.

We celebrate the new hemispheric programme that came out of the Summit of the Americas in the economic field and has strengthened cooperation between the OAS and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. This strengthening is especially evident in the signing of the agreement on the Joint Programme on Social Policies for Latin America - in which my country has a special interest - and in other areas, such as statistics, the environment and small and medium-sized businesses. The new OAS emphasis on the subject of trade and market integration opens an important field for cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

Another aspect in which cooperation can and should be furthered is the international fight against illicit drugs. We applaud the enhanced cooperation between the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission. My delegation feels that much remains to be done in this area, especially in the harmonization of strategies and laws, the gathering and analysis of information and the coordination of operational activities.

On the cultural front, the establishment of a working group to identify new areas for cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture and communications between the OAS and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization should be underscored.

These are but a few examples of the great potential for cooperation between two such friendly organizations as the OAS and the United Nations. There is no doubt that the ongoing exchange of information is healthy. With respect to joint activities, it is necessary only that they strictly adhere to the fundamental precepts of both organizations and that common efforts be rationalized through the division of labour. Experience is teaching us that striking the right balance for joint work is not difficult.

Nevertheless, it is necessary that the increasing pace of contacts be oriented towards objectives that allow the achievement of concrete results, especially in the field of development. The developing countries are increasingly expecting answers from the multilateral forums to their compelling problems in the area of economic and social development. Although violence persists in some areas of Latin America, the most pressing challenge for the continent's stability is now the need to overcome the extreme poverty in which so many of our citizens find themselves.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize that the Subgroup on Coordination of the Informal Open-ended Working Group on An Agenda for Peace has studied in depth the Secretary-General's proposals on the subject of coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations and has arrived at a consensus text that summarizes the positions of the OAS membership on this matter. This is relevant since today we have a clear statement by the OAS General Assembly on the Secretary-General's concepts, reached after a broad review of the needs for coordination with the United Nations. We hope that the text will be circulated as soon as possible and that it will not be subject to submission by other subgroups of the results of their work, which is still ongoing, especially since it is a step towards strengthening the ability of the United Nations to cooperate with regional bodies.

We acknowledge and hail the spirit of cooperation; we believe that in large part the search for joint work between the organizations depends on that spirit.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): One of the clearest examples of international globalization is the fact that, to an increasing degree, problems affecting one region have a very deep impact on the rest of world society, which shows that coordinated action and greater cooperation are becoming indispensable.

At the same time, States have begun a process of overt regionalization based on economic, cultural and political affinities. This is in no way a move towards isolationism; on the contrary, it is further confirmation that on the world scene diversity is a universal factor for integration.

In this connection, intergovernmental organizations are being called upon to strengthen their ties and improve their channels of communication. There are various

declarations to this effect, and it seems obvious that the international community wishes to carry out this programme, which has been particularly dynamic at the regional level in several respects, although there could still be improvements in others, such as the settlement of disputes and the maintenance of regional peace and security.

Indeed, there is a programme of close cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS), which can be seen, *inter alia*, in the support of both organizations for the legislative, municipal and presidential elections in Haiti from June to December 1995, as well as their support for the joint United Nations/OAS International Civilian Mission to Haiti (MICIVIH), a point that is made in the Secretary-General's report on this subject, which contains interesting information about the scope and nature of cooperation between the OAU and the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

With regard to the contents of paragraph 21 of the Secretary-General's report, Ecuador would like to state that, having removed 95 per cent of the landmines in our territory, we have now requested financial assistance from the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs to remove the remaining 5 per cent. Detection and deactivation of those mines are of constant concern to the Government of Ecuador. In this connection, Ecuador supported the adoption of the resolution submitted to the recent General Assembly of the OAS on the regional desire to create a mine-free zone in the Americas.

My delegation believes that the two organizations have a common responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security and to serve as entities for helping to prevent conflicts. To this end, we could develop a better relationship between the United Nations Security Council and the Permanent Council of the OAS based on the common desire expressed by the Presidents of both bodies to that effect. The maintenance of peace and preventive diplomacy in particular are of special importance and deserve greater coordination. It is clear that potential or existing conflicts could be more quickly resolved with the support and cooperation of neighbouring States that are more familiar with the background and evolution of the disputes.

The experience of multinational coalitions in restoring peace, with the involvement of regional States, has shown in several cases that they can be particularly effective. Of particular interest here are the proposals set forth by the United Nations Secretary-General in the Supplement to "An Agenda for Peace", where he identified five forms of cooperation between the world body and regional organizations: consultation, diplomatic support, operational support, co-deployment and joint operations. We believe that we should focus on those areas through joint work between the secretariats of the OAS and the United Nations. Another area of particular importance is mechanisms for rapid reaction and rapid deployment, in which new methods of cooperation could be developed.

The delegation of Ecuador would like to state once again that it fully supports all actions designed to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States in order to make the work of both international bodies harmonious, effective and coherent. To that end, United Nations reforms now being considered should not neglect the work that regional organizations should carry out in order to ensure their better utilization and give them greater effect.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): As Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States for this month, I am pleased to speak today on agenda item 22, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States", and to recommend to the Assembly the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution (A/51/L.5/Rev.1) before it.

The increasing complexity of international relations and the major political and economic changes in the Americas are revealing more than ever before the pressing need for cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). That cooperation, quite appropriately, is carried on under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter and fully respects the competence, functions and mandates of each of the organizations.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies have always acted as catalysts in seeking solutions to international problems of all kinds. Greater cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States is therefore vital if we are effectively to tackle the region's problems of socio-economic development and the building of democratic institutions.

We are pleased to see the successful cooperation that has been created between the United Nations and the OAS based on the shared objectives of the two organizations in the areas of promoting peace and socio-economic development.

In his report of 19 August 1996 (A/51/297), the Secretary-General describes various aspects of this cooperation. While he said that joint efforts in Haiti constituted the main expression of this cooperation, he also emphasized other areas where the two organizations have worked together closely.

Of the members of the Organization of American States, Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, Mexico and Paraguay benefit from technical cooperation programmes carried out by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Centre for Human Rights. Evaluation missions relating to technical cooperation needs are scheduled for Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Guatemala.

The United Nations University has concluded an agreement of cooperation with the OAS dealing with the development of human resources. At the economic level, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to coordinating its work with the economic and social tasks of the OAS, opened up a liaison office at the headquarters of the regional organization in order to strengthen contacts and develop their relationship. In 1995-1996 the United Nations and the OAS strengthened regional cooperation within the context of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the OAS Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission.

These are some of the outstanding achievements that attest to the fact that strengthening cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization of American States benefits both bodies. The framework for this cooperation should allow them to exchange information on their activities, and engage in mutual consultations and cooperation in implementing specific programmes.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 253 (III), of 16 October 1948, I now call on the Observer for the Organization of American States.

Mr. Kaufman (Organization of American States) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I wish to convey the warm greetings of the Secretary-General of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the recognition and satisfaction of the OAS Assistant Secretary-General, Ambassador Thomas, at the positive evolution of the work of coordination between the two systems.

The goals expressed by the two organizations in many resolutions include the achievement of aims such as deepening and expanding coordination mechanisms to maximize the use of human and financial resources as well as the professional experience of both organizations.

In the agreement of cooperation between the two Secretariats signed in April 1995 by the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the Secretary-General of the OAS, Mr. César Gaviria, a number of instruments were agreed upon aimed at further strengthening the ties between the United Nations and the OAS and committing the two organizations to act jointly in a sustained way on matters relevant to both.

While cooperation between the United Nations and the OAS began years before that recent agreement, this formalizes a number of goals that have been implemented throughout the years, such as the fluid exchange of information and documentation, which was recently addressed and is promising good results. Furthermore, the agreement lays down the basis for a stable process of ongoing coordination and evaluation, which was supported by both organizations and consolidated in the OAS in a resolution adopted at the OAS General Assembly session held in Panama last June.

The coordination mechanism which has been improved over time and which is working satisfactorily consists in a permanent consultative relationship between the two organizations. The link between them is carried out by the so-called focal points established within the United Nations and the OAS, respectively the office of the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and the office of the OAS Assistant Secretary-General.

We believe that this coordination modality has yielded positive results and continues to do so. This mechanism is constantly being reviewed as needs arise and in accordance with the characteristics of joint technical cooperation by the United Nations and the OAS.

On operational matters, the OAS provides the logistical and technical support for its secretariat offices in member countries, which have received instructions to act in coordination with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representatives in each of the countries, depending on the requirements of each case.

Allow me here to recount some recent joint activities by the United Nations and the OAS, which in our view have yielded positive results. The OAS and the United Nations continued to cooperate within the joint operation of the International Civilian Mission to Haiti

(MICIVIH) established in February 1993. There are also permanent contacts and coordinating mechanisms in the region between the OAS Unit for the Promotion of Democracy and the Electoral Assistance Division of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a view to promoting an exchange of information and programme coordination.

With reference to activities drug prevention and abuse, the OAS Educational Affairs Department and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme have supported plans devised in 1995 by the Working Group on Youth and national prevention plans for Central America, Panama and the Dominican Republic.

Concerning joint action in the area of regional development and conservation of the environment, we have acted with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. At the request of Governments, the OAS has participated in the preparation and publication of several technical documents on alternative technologies to increase the availability of water in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We could cite a significant number of other activities but given time constraints this is not possible, but I would like to name just a few, such as coordination activities in the area of information and statistics; the subjects addressed by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission, the Inter-American Commission of Women; the activities in the area of trade; and the follow-up activities to the World Summit for Social Development. All of these actions reaffirm a trend of drawing closer together and growing cooperation between the two organizations.

In United Nations resolutions, we find a reaffirmation of the commitment to promote with regional organizations joint actions which over the years have been shown to be of significance. The OAS for its part, through its vast experience in the region, is in a position together with the United Nations to assist in the above-mentioned areas as well as in new fields that may arise based on the needs of the countries of the region.

I do not wish to end this statement without once again reiterating the firm commitment of the OAS to continue to work in a sustained manner towards the achievement of the common goals of our two organizations.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. In view of the desire of members to dispose of this item expeditiously, I should like to consult the Assembly with a view to proceeding immediately to consider the draft resolution contained in A/51/L.5/Rev.1.

In this connection, since the draft resolution was only circulated this morning, it would be necessary to wave the relevant provision of rule 78 of the rules of procedure, which read as follows:

> "As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting."

Unless I hear any objections I will take it that the Assembly agrees with this proposal.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: We shall now proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.5/Rev.1. In this connection I should like to announce that since the introduction of the draft resolution Bolivia and Sweden have become sponsors.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.5/Rev.1?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 51/4)

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 22?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 28

Universal Congress on the Panama Canal

Report of the Secretary-General (A/51/281)

Draft resolution (A/51/L.4)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Panama to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.4.

Mr. Illueca (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): By resolution 50/12, the General Assembly supported the convening of the Universal Congress on the Panama

Canal and requested the Secretary-General to report on the implement of the resolution. That report has now been circulated to Member States.

During the debate on the resolution, which took place during the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, on 7 November 1995, delegations mentioned the contribution to the Canal by French creativity and by the successful construction work and management of the United States. These contributions are landmarks in the history of the Panama Canal, the construction of which had been suggested since the Spanish Empire's era of discovery, conquest and colonization. Let me reiterate here that Panama has decided to take responsibility for the future of the Canal. This is a major responsibility of our territorial sovereignty and brings with it an inheritance of advances in technology, human labour and rapid interocean transportation - in sum, the successful development of a valuable resource for worthy joint activities of benefit above all to the people of Panama and in general to all the peoples of the Earth.

It is a special honour for me to formally introduce, on behalf of Panama, along with the distinguished delegations of the United States and France, draft resolution A/51/L.4, entitled "Universal Congress on the Panama Canal". This joint draft resolution opens up the path for the relevant organs, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, as well as the international community in general, to cooperate in the holding of the Universal Congress.

The scope of this cooperation is described and updated in the Secretary-General's report of 8 August 1996 (A/51/281) and in the letter from the Permanent Representative of Panama (A/51/477). These documents provide background on the draft resolution hereby being submitted to Member States. These documents contain extensive information about actions that either have already been taken and or have been planned by the Congress Organizing Commission, the Foreign Ministry of Panama, the Interoceanic Regional Authority, the Panama Canal Commission, the Transition Commission for the transfer of the Panama Canal, as well as under other bodies of our national Government and our civil society. In this connection, we must reiterate to the Secretary-General our appreciation of the important work being done in Panama by the United Nations Development Programme in its role as facilitator in the promotion of national consensus on issues relating to the Panama Canal.

In preparing for the Universal Congress, we are mobilizing our energies to do work that will be of value to all countries, to all businesses and to all users of this interocean waterway. It is clear that in holding the Congress, we will be manifesting our will to honour our solemn commitments to implement the Torrijos-Carter agreements and the neutrality Treaty. This will has existed in Panama since these international agreements were signed.

The Congress is also being held because of the urgent need to take the steps to ensure that the Panama Canal continues as a vital means and resource for international trade, maritime transport and economic development. The Congress will serve as a forum and repository for all contributions on how to develop and modernize the legislation, institutions, services and technology so that the Panama Canal remains part of the interoceanic culture bolstered by profitable exchanges, intelligent, creative and noble work, and economic growth and progress.

This desire to serve the world means that we must make a real effort and prepare ourselves. This is s possible task. The people of Panama are resolved to make this effort. And this resolve is strengthened and encouraged by international understanding, support and cooperation. In this regard, I repeat that this Congress on the Panama Canal is a very important component of the Panamanian commitment to our past and our future. It is a project, a labour and a wish. The joint draft resolution is imbued with this spirit of international cooperation, and we urge the General Assembly to do us the honour of adopting it by consensus.

I would like to mention the very happy coincidence that we are discussing this item on United Nations Day, which today celebrates, for the good of mankind, its fifty-first anniversary as it continues to work to achieve its purposes and principles and to reform its institutional machinery. My delegation believes that this coincidence is indeed propitious, because the universality which characterizes the United Nations will also mark the holding the Universal Congress of the Panama Canal, and because plans for the Congress have enjoyed the effective and diligent cooperation of the Secretariat. On this memorable occasion, I should like to pay deserved tribute to the men and women of the United Nations Secretariat who so tirelessly and at all levels devote their time and energy to carrying out the work that is so essential to the proper fulfilment of the mission of this Organization.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*interpretation from French*): In 1879 the Société de géographie de Paris convened the International Congress for Study of the Interocean Canal, under the presidency of Count Ferdinand de Lesseps. The Congress culminated in the resolution that the canal should be built along a route which would link the Atlantic Ocean to the Bay of Panama on the Pacific Ocean. In this way the Panama Canal was born.

The Panamanian Government has now taken the initiative of convening in Panama in 1997, 118 years after the Paris Congress, another Universal Congress on the Panama Canal. This international meeting will aim to continue the effective use of the Canal as part of an open multilateral trade system, with a dynamic administration able to address the development problems of the twenty-first century.

The draft resolution before the General Assembly is intended to support this initiative by the Panamanian Government. France is pleased to see that the Panama Canal will thus enjoy lasting development. We are pleased too that the authorities which in less than four years will be responsible for managing the Canal are thus anxious to ensure that it becomes an integrated component of the international economic system.

We have been prompted by these reasons, and by our historic memory, to join the United States and Panama in sponsoring this draft resolution.

We believe that what the Government of Panama wishes to do is in accordance with the universal objective which inspired Ferdinand de Lesseps when, more than a century ago, he undertook the construction of the Canal. The survival of this spirit of universality, heightened by today's anniversary of the United Nations, should contribute to the excellent relations which already bind France and Panama.

Mr. Petrella (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Matters relating to Panama are always of great interest to Argentina. That is why we wish to participate in this debate. We express our gratitude for the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General, which gives us information on the Congress Organizing Commission and its functions and on the programme of the Congress, to be held in September 1997.

Argentina also expresses its support for the initiative of the Panamanian Government in convening the Congress with the participation of Governments and other bodies for the purpose of jointly reviewing the role the Panama Canal should play in the twenty-first century.

My country, together with the other countries of the region, has followed with great interest matters pertaining to the Panama Canal and the negotiations which led to the Treaties signed on 7 September 1977, known as the Torrijos-Carter treaties, promoted by the Organization of American States (OAS) in response to Panama's vigorous diplomatic action, as witnessed by this Assembly and by Ambassador Jorge Illueca of Panama himself. At that historic occasion, Heads of State or Government and other representatives of American States signed the Washington Declaration, which recognized the importance for the hemisphere, for trade and for world navigation of the agreements to ensure the ongoing accessibility and neutrality of the Panama Canal.

Today there is no doubt about Panama's strategic and geopolitical importance. It is a pivot of relations between the northern and southern American continents and for interoceanic communication. It was the entry point for much of Europe's influence, and is an obligatory staging point for a significant part of world trade and of political ideas of the day. We are convinced that the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal will promote understanding and stability, as well as development and international cooperation, and will thus make possible the orderly use of the resources of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

For these reasons, we wish to convey our support for the draft resolution. We fully support the statement that will be made by the Chairman of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

In conclusion, I note that Panama is a model country whose progress in institutional and economic matters is well known and appreciated: all the more reason to support this significant initiative.

Mr. Marrero (United States of America): The Panana Canal has been a key link in world commerce for 83 years and will remain a vital commercial artery well into the twenty-first century. The people of the United States are justifiably proud of its construction and unmatched record of uninterrupted operation.

On 31 December 1999, in accordance with the Panama Canal Treaty of 1977, stewardship of the Canal will pass from the Government of the United States to the Government of Panama. The United States is committed

to turning over to Panama a world-class canal as beneficial to world shipping in the twenty-first century as it has been in the twentieth.

We are also committed to working closely with the Government of Panama in completing a transition of which both our countries can be proud. The Canal, although still operated under United States authority, is headed by a bi-national board and has had Panamanian nationals as its top manager for the last six years. Over 90 per cent of all Canal workers are now Panamanian.

The Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, to be held in Panama in September 1997, will give the world's shippers, shipowners, port authorities, maritime organizations and all those interested in the continued well-being of the Canal a chance to examine the transition process up close and in detail. It will also provide an opportunity to discuss and comment on the transition process, Canal operations, and the role of the Canal in the twenty-first century.

The United States is pleased to join in sponsoring this draft resolution supporting the Government of Panama's Universal Congress, and we urge its adoption.

Mr. Izquierdo (Ecuador) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Panama Canal is an indispensable transportation link, especially for the countries with a south-western coast on the Pacific Ocean whose international trade is largely with the Atlantic basin. My country therefore attaches special priority to this question, because the use of the Panama Canal is fundamental to the economic development of Ecuador. It provides the most efficient means of transporting our products. Without it we would not be able to export a great many of our products, or we would have to use much longer alternative routes at too great a cost.

In this context, Ecuador supports any agreed measure aimed at ensuring the continued accessibility and neutrality of the Canal and supports the plans of the Government of Panama, as well as the activities undertaken within the framework of the United Nations system and through governmental and non-governmental organizations for the holding of a Universal Congress on the Panama Canal in September 1997 to consider the role that that important waterway will play in the twenty-first century.

We believe that the holding of the Congress is the right way to approach the final stage of implementation of the provisions of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, when the Canal will be transferred to the sovereign control of the Republic of Panama. It will also give us a valuable opportunity to assess and demonstrate to the international community the efficiency of its operation and the significant role that the interoceanic waterway plays in promoting world trade and international transport.

It is therefore of special interest to note that, through the Congress, international cooperation will be promoted in order to achieve the balanced and sustainable use of the resources of the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and the development of the canal basin and coastal areas. In addition, the Congress will contribute to the expansion of world trade as a means of achieving the sustained economic growth of developing countries.

In supporting the holding of the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, Ecuador again wishes to emphasize the importance of this waterway for the countries of the South Pacific, of which Ecuador is the greatest user in terms of export volume. In conclusion, I wish to say that my country firmly supports the necessary and appropriate establishment of the broadest possible system of consultations with State agencies and private users of the Panama Canal on all matters relating to its operation and costs. That is the clear objective of the Government of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Lelong (Haiti) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, which Haiti is chairing for the month of October, I have the honour to speak on agenda item 28, with regard to the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal.

The signing of the Torrijos-Carter Treaties on 7 September 1977, providing for the transfer of complete control of the Panama Canal to the Republic of Panama on 31 December 1999, marked the outcome of a long and sometimes difficult period of negotiation, an outcome on which the two main partners can congratulate themselves. It was a welcome solution to a question at the very heart of the nation of Panama.

To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the signing of those Treaties and to prepare itself well for its new responsibilities, the Government of Panama has taken the initiative of organizing the Universal Congress on the Panama Canal, to be held in Panama City in September 1997. This Congress will be along the same lines as the 1879 Congress of the Geographical Society of Paris, chaired by Ferdinand de Lesseps. It will enable the

participants jointly to examine the role to be played by this waterway in the twenty-first century.

It is intended not only to ratify continued neutrality of the canal, but also to offer all countries of the world an opportunity to become directly familiar with this means of transportation and to prepare for a smooth transfer of responsibility, which is already well under way, as 90 per cent of current employees at all levels, including the Administrator General, are Panamanian nationals. It will also provide for projects to ensure its active and continued role in the world trade system, which is undergoing explosive growth here at the end of the century, and for ambitious projects to open to trade and international investment the entire zone adjacent to the Canal, covering almost 150,000 hectares, which will thereby become an engine for the economic transformation of Panama.

Support for the Congress is not only a demonstration of solidarity with Panama, but another link in the chain of international cooperation for mutual benefit. The members of the Latin American and Caribbean Group express their support for the draft resolution and call for its adoption by consensus.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.4.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.4?

Draft resolution A/51/L.4 was adopted (resolution 51/5).

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 28?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 160

Observer status for the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly

Draft resolution (A/51/L.2)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Jamaica to introduce draft resolution A/51/L.2.

Ms. Durrant (Jamaica): I have the honour to introduce for the consideration of the General Assembly the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.2, under the agenda item entitled "Observer status for the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly". The draft resolution, which is sponsored by 55 countries, reflects the decision adopted unanimously by the Assembly of the International Seabed Authority on 26 August 1996.

It will be recalled that the General Assembly, in its decision 49/426 of 9 December 1994, decided that the granting of observer status at the General Assembly should be confined to States and to those intergovernmental organizations whose activities cover matters of interest to the Assembly.

The International Seabed Authority is an autonomous intergovernmental organization established under article 156 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and therefore the granting of observer status to the Authority would be consistent with this decision of the General Assembly.

The International Seabed Authority has been vested with a task of vital importance to us all. The Authority has legal personality. The seat of the Authority is in Jamaica. Under article 157 of the Convention and paragraph 1 of Section 1 of the Annex to the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Authority is the organization through which States Parties, in accordance with the regime for the international seabed Area established in Part XI of the Convention and the implementing Agreement, organize and control activities in the Area, particularly with a view to administering the resources of the Area. The powers and functions of the Authority are those expressly conferred upon it by the Convention.

The Authority has three principal organs, the Assembly, the Council and the Secretariat. The Authority is based on the sovereign equality of all its members. All States Parties to the Convention are, *ipso facto*, members of the Authority. The Convention, together with the implementing Agreement, is a universal instrument.

Following the adoption of the implementing Agreement on 28 July 1994 and the entry into force of the Convention on 16 November 1994, the first meeting of the International Seabed Authority took place at its headquarters in Jamaica from 16 to 18 November 1994.

In accordance with its provisions, the implementing Agreement entered into force on 28 July 1996.

The Convention on the Law of the Sea is one of the most widely subscribed international instruments with some 106 States Parties. The institutional framework of the International Seabed Authority is now in place, with the election of a Secretary-General in March and a Council and President in August 1996.

All the States Parties to this Convention and those enjoying provisional membership in accordance with the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention are convinced of the vital importance of its work and of a coherent approach to all matters relating to the law of the sea and ocean affairs. It is in this context, and in recognition of the ongoing interest of the General Assembly in this subject area, that we make this request for the granting of observer status to the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly.

I am sure that the importance of this status being granted to the Authority, which will enable it to take part in the relevant deliberations of the United Nations General Assembly, is readily recognized by all. The Authority's presence in the General Assembly can only serve to enrich the dialogue and the understanding of matters concerning the law of the sea and ocean affairs that come before this Assembly.

On behalf of the sponsors, I wish to request the General Assembly to adopt by consensus the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.2, entitled "Observer status for the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly".

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/51/L.2.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/51/L.2?

Draft resolution A/51/L.2 was adopted (resolution 51/6).

The Acting President: In accordance with the resolution just adopted, I now call on the Secretary-General of the International Seabed Authority, Mr. Satya Nandan.

Mr. Nandan (International Seabed Authority): On behalf of the members of the International Seabed Authority and as the Secretary-General of the Authority, I would like to thank the General Assembly for inviting the Authority to participate in its deliberations in the capacity of Observer.

I would also like to thank the States that proposed the inscription of item 160, on Observer status for the International Seabed Authority in the General Assembly, on the agenda and also those States that sponsored the draft resolution contained in document A/51/L.2, which has just been adopted by the Assembly.

The General Assembly has, over many years, reviewed the developments relating to the law of the sea. In recent times, since the entry into force of the Convention in November 1994, it has reaffirmed the importance of the annual consideration and review of the overall developments pertaining to the implementation of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as other developments relating to the law of the sea and ocean affairs. The law of the sea, as reflected in the provisions of the Convention, has many components and the competencies for the implementation of its various aspects are dispersed among a number of international organizations and bodies, including the three new autonomous institutions established under the Convention: the International Seabed Authority, the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea. While these institutions, organizations and bodies have specific mandates, they cannot act in isolation from each other or from the deliberations of the General Assembly on the global developments relating to the law of the sea. Indeed, the Convention on the Law of the Sea is premised on the principle that:

> "the problems of ocean space are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole" (*United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, third preambular paragraph*).

Similarly, the General Assembly would be lacking if its deliberations on developments relating to the law of the sea, or its review of the implementation of the Convention were to take place without the contribution or participation of the various competent international bodies.

This would certainly be true in the case of the International Seabed Authority, which has the unique responsibility to organize and control activities in the international seabed Area, in accordance with the Convention and the Agreement relating to the implementation of Part XI of the Convention of 28 July 1994.

The international seabed Area consists of some 50 per cent of the earth's surface and forms the largest portion of the global commons. The Authority has the particular responsibility to administer the resources of the deep seabed Area and to ensure that the development of these resources is to the benefit of humankind as a whole. It has the responsibility, *inter alia*, of monitoring the environmental aspects of the activities in the deep seabed and of promoting the development of marine technology and marine scientific research in the international Area.

The International Seabed Authority thus has an interest in the deliberations of the Assembly on matters related to the marine environment, marine technology, marine scientific research, issues related to natural resources and legal and political issues insofar as these matters have implications for the international ocean Area. It is with these considerations in mind that the members of the Authority considered that it would be of mutual benefit for the Authority to seek the status of Observer at the United Nations.

Once again, on behalf of the International Seabed Authority, I acknowledge with gratitude the granting of observer status to the Authority and look forward to very fruitful cooperation between the two institutions.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 160?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.